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ABSTRACT

By providing conventions, journals, and bibliographies as outlets for scholarship and research, speech communication associations make available resources necessary for the discipline to pursue its scholarship and serve as a distribution system for relevant research materials. An association also fulfills the important function of refereeing--contributing to recognition, promotion, and tenure while preventing information overload. Associations also support alternative approaches and commission scholarship that otherwise would not be available. Many of the things that associations undertook initially are now being done by academicians. In dealing with a larger, more mature, and more specialized profession, the speech communication associations face some problems: increased specialization leads to fragmentation and sometimes conflicting demands, smaller faculty size and fewer graduate students will probably be the rule for the next decade, patterns of research and publication are changing, and publication costs are rising while subscriptions are not. Professional organizations will have to adjust to these changes, but whatever the adjustments may entail, these organizations will remain essential for speech communication research and scholarship. (JL)

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THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESEARCH

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Within the scope of this Dimension Series Session on "The History of Research in Our Profession," my concern is the interaction between professional organizations and research. To explicate that interaction I typically use the Speech Communication Association from its 1914 inception as "The National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking." We are a very young discipline despite our ancient roots.

This paper utilizes early statements about the relationship of research and the association to establish the central thesis, briefly reviews some highlights of the evolution of the interrelationship of the professional association and the research enterprise, and concludes with an evaluation of the relationship with some concerns about the future.

Our discipline has used a variety of "professional organizations" to unite the scholarship/research enterprise with the teaching/application enterprise. Tensions with this union were evident with the first reflections upon the nature of our organization and continue to this day. Do not be surprised if the quotations have a very familiar ring: the same arguments continue today, changed and yet unchanging. Make no mistake--our professional organizations were the means of developing our research potential, they were a necessary component of that enterprise. They are less obviously so necessary today and the way in which organizations relate to research is changing--perhaps less so for our discipline than for others, due to differences in history.

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The first issue of the Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking probed "The Need for Research." James Winans posed four questions: "What is the good of research? What is worth doing? Shall we be allowed to do it? Who will do it?"[1] Care to predict his answers?

His answer to the first question: "Research is the standard way into the sheepfold."[2] With regard to acceptance, he wrote, ". . . we do bristle. We are not able yet to take ourselves for granted. We shall feel better and do better when we can."[3]

"What is worth doing?" included voice; psychological problems; "Persuasion, a tremendous study in human nature, needs much work. The very meaning of the word is hazy."[4] And we have much to do: "We shall not for some time be driven to the painful emendation of the text of Demosthenes or to studying the influence of Quintilian on Patrick Henry. We ought not to be led into dry-as-dust studies, and I do not fear that we shall be; we are too constantly confronted with the practical nature of our work."[5]

Winans was less sanguine about the question, "Shall we be allowed to do it?" He admits that we may not be encouraged at first. He stresses the need for graduate programs and graduate students. But he has heard that things look hopeful at Harvard and he consulted the Dean of his Graduate School (Cornell) who, he reported, "is glad we wish to do advanced work; (and feels) that it will be good for us, good for our work, good for the university."[6]

He has no doubt as to the fourth question, "Who will do the work?" "We recognize that the work must be done by brainy young people."[7] Further, this

will attract good minds to the field and the oldsters can stand aside for the young ones who will have the methodological strengths needed.

This article was followed by "Research in Public Speaking" authored by the Research Committee. Their eight pages suggested subjects and problems for research, discussed the need for bibliographies, for research methods, issues involving gathering information, terminology, standardization and even the need for a summer conference. Under the heading of professional ethics, they noted, "The time may come when it will seem wise to propose a standard by which to judge the work of teachers of public speaking."[8]

James M. O'Neill, the first president, writing on "The National Association" urged people to join and attend the first national convention to be held November 26-27, 1915 in Chicago. The dues were $2.00 per year plus a $1.00 registration fee at the convention. Subscriptions to the Quarterly could be obtained for $2.00 per year for non-members.[9]

O'Neill assured all that the organization would assist in the organization and activity of local or sectional associations and conferences. The national organization was to be a medium of cooperation and coordination. Further, O'Neill promised, "We will give in the pages of the Quarterly Journal the right of way over all other material to articles giving the results of research which come to us through the Chairman of the Committee on Research. We will give practically unlimited space to such articles and will save space for articles promised us in advance. . . . We will not only save space for your article but will avoid publishing articles of a similar nature on the same subject until yours has appeared."10

What strikes me in reviewing the early years of the Association is that with 17 charter members and rather slow growth, the Association charted a role that by contemporary standards was audacious. They faced the need to create new departments (separate from English), introduce speech into many colleges and universities as well as high schools, develop textbooks, stimulate research, create graduate programs, develop a journal, get about the myriad of tasks in establishing a "new discipline.

The first convention had "over 60 teachers present representing 41 institutions in 14 states."[11] The 11th convention in 1926 was the first to have an attendance of over 300. (All attendees were listed in the Quarterly Journal and including such people as Wayne Morse, a Weiss from DePauw, Ewbank from Ablion.[12])

Graduate degrees were few in number--only 4 masters being granted in 1920 to bring us a grand total of 18. The first Ph.D. was granted in 1922, the next 3 in 1926--a total of 135 Ph.D.'s granted by 1938.[13]

Certainly the early years had their share of conflicts. Everett Lee Hunt attacked "The Scientific Spirit in Public Speaking." While finding much to agree with, he faulted the view of "the ideal of research as a means of traveling the orthodox way into the sheepfold." He was neither "sure that we belonged in the fold, or that we should be happy after we were safely within."[14] He argued for a "fundamental difference in the work of the public speaking department and those of other brnches of college and university work."[15] He objected to dry scholarship and "scholasticism." Indeed, "ideas of scholasticism now prevalent in much of the research work of the universities

would be . . . fatal to enthusiasm and inspiration in public speaking."[16] And, of course, a rebuttal followed from editor O'Neill.

Consider this 1927 editorial by Everett Lee Hunt: "During his incumbency (Professor Woolbert's) the diverse interests in our field were finding and asserting themselves, each was inclined, perhaps, to regard itself of fundamental importance, or to be irritated because some other interest clearly regarded itself in that light."[17] But progress was made for "It became unnecessary for each worker to labor on his wall with a sword in the hand."[18] There were, by the way, 1500 members in the association in 1927.

Consider Winans in 1929 discussing arguments about reading manuscripts rather than giving good speeches at conventions. Winans acknowledged the value of good speaking but said that on hard subjects he looked for a person who "thought out his problem . . . put it into good shape and . . . can finish on time."[19]

But this is not an effort to prove to you that most of the problems we confront today are not new. Let us move to the present by briefly ticking off some things accomplished for the discipline through its professional organizations. The associations were not only the means for accomplishment but also many accomplishments would have been impossible without the associations.

We have no easily available sources to indicate the rate and nature of the progress. Regional organizations, national organizations, debate and forensics associations, state associations waxed and waned but largely grew and stabilized the profession. Some started with mimeographed or dittoed newsletters, then

small journals. For example, we have the Journal of the American Forensic Association replacing The Register in 1964. While most associations sought a scholarly journal, not all did so initially. CSSJ began in 1949, Communication Quarterly in 1953--both in response to member demands.

We have had an increase in journal pages available for research (see Table 1). We move from 316 pages available for scholarly material (Matlon Index and Matlon's decisions on what to list as scholarly materials)[20] in one journal in 1920 to 341 in 1930, 677 in 1940, 1160 in 1950, 1995 in 1960, 2982 in 1970 and 4281 in 1979. This is based upon 13 journals now listed in the Index to Journals in Communication Studies. (Journalism Quarterly is excluded.) Also, note the rate of increase in members of graduate degrees.

This summary takes no account of the richnesses offered in book reviews (for a time old books as well as new ones reviewed), the Forum, Editorials, News and Notes, SPECTRA, Directories, etc. Perhaps more essential to getting launched than keeping afloat, but useful still.

What do the associations provide in addition to conventions and journals as outlets for scholarship and research? For a time much attention was devoted to development of bibliographies. Currently there is the ERIC system and many independent publications under that system including bibliographies and classroom materials. We have seminar series on and off various campuses and at the convention; summer conferences; prizes and awards.

In short, associations make available the resources necessary for the discipline to pursue its scholarship. What is the membership list? In one sense it is a distribution system for relevant research materials. It is an

identification of people involved in the profession, a way of identifying colleagues.

An association makes available a refereeing process, a jurying, essential not only to the scholar but also to the consumer. Yes, the refereeing contributes to recognition, promotion and tenure. And don't sell that short. But more importantly it sorts out the chaff that may not be of value. In an age of information overload, where we increasingly feel drenched if not drowned in the profusion of words pouring forth, selection saves us. The process results in improvement of presentation, catches errors that the non-specialist might not detect, etc. Far from being a means of helping the scholars get promoted as often argued, the process is a key protection for all in being able to trust and act upon what we read and in controlling the assault upon our senses.

This process is not without difficulty. Editors have rejected new scholarly approaches. Others have published particular items with disclaimers. Some editors have opposed submissions from certain areas or approaches within the discipline. Some have commissioned particular articles. At times a good article is rejected because "it doesn't fit" or "I have published too much of you already," or "this is not appropriate."

One response has been to create new journals to serve various areas or to provide small "journals" such as Free Speech Yearbook or Alternative Communications. Many of these do not "break even." Not only are they subsidized by free editorial work and support from the particular association, but also in one case the effort to charge a small subscription fee was found to

be more expensive than providing the item free to those who wanted to be on the mailing list.

The associations have commissioned scholarship that would otherwise not be available: History and Criticism of American Public Address, A History of Speech Education in America, The Bicentennial Monographs. And associations have been the means of reshaping the discipline: think of the various developmental conferences such as the New Orleans Conference, the Wingspread Conference, Forensics, and Community Colleges, and the various summer Research Conferences.

Without the national, regional and state associations, most of these things would not have been done. No discipline exists without a professional-scholarly association to bind it together. Which is chicken and which is egg? Each demands the other. But without the associations and what they made possible we could not have had a discipline that exists as ours does today; even now we could not maintain the discipline without the associations. This is not to argue that the profession/discipline is organized in the best or only way possible nor that other countries and other organizations have not done it differently.

Many of the things that the associations undertook initially--reporting on state and regional activity, providing a network for people in the profession, posing research questions, generating bibliographies, educating current teachers to the possibility of research are now done effectively by well-established academicians in our colleges and universities. We have cut back on many old tasks on the grounds they are less necessary for a mature discipline or will be accomplished in a natural way in established programs. Yet, the associations

still publish almost all our journals, still provide our conferences, conventions, and seminars, still provide the networks that link people to the profession. We are today a markedly larger profession with much more mature and more specialized interests and therein lie some of our problems.

What judgments might be made of the current situation or the future? Can we write a "Prolegomena" for the relationship of research and scholarship and our professional organizations? A few problem areas should be noted.

Increased specialization. In the late 1960's the Association held a Constitutional Convention. It added communication to the label speech. It collapsed a very large interest group structure into eight subject matter divisions and created sections to represent professional interests. But as the 1970's progressed, we added more caucuses and commissions, more independent groups affiliated with SCA (who appear as programming units at the convention) and more and more specialization in newsletters and journals in and outside of SCA became apparent. There is a continued intensification of selectivity in exposure to articles in the journals. And there is the perception that unless an association is serving the particular interest, the association is to be faulted or is not worthy of support. This is seen in demands that an association support a particular political or social policy demand which is essentially outside the discipline. It is seen in arguments from every sector that the association is not doing enough for that sector. There is a spread of groups demanding allocation of program space. One way to gain program space is to become another group--thus assured of some space. But the dangers are all

too real. Identical programs with different participants submitted by different agencies is one.

We overburden the system and lose internal communication. Efforts become fragmented or people stretched so thin that something snaps. And the support base that makes possible the several activities may be faced with a demand for so many activities that the support base erodes--either because people transfer allegiance and dues to other organizations or because the effort to supply the demands results in increases in dues that exact a toll of from 5 to 20% of the former membership per increase at or below the level of inflation.

How long can continued fractionization, individualization, withdrawal from the general commitment proceed without major damage to our research. We have long since divorced the American Speech and Hearing Association and American Theatre Association. The International Communication Association now meets separately at a convention approaching 1,000 in attendance. Historically each organization has maintained operations while more and more groups become independent and research productivity and quality have increased. Each of us has grown despite or because of the split. But can this continue?

A second problem (interactive with the first) is that the future holds a smaller faculty in higher education for at least a decade, although our discipline may hold at steady state or in some institutions increase in numbers. We will face a declining number of graduate students interested in being like us and probably the quality will decline as well. We will need to maintain our scholarship in the face of reduced graduate students, classes, and quality of students.

We have seen great changes in the patterns of the discipline. When I was in graduate school in the late 1950's almost no graduate students published before completion of the degree and, further, until the debut program innovation about 1960, a graduate student (unless otherwise established in the profession) was never seen on a convention panel. For a variety of reasons, particularly the growth of empirical research, graduate students now regularly publish before graduation. Convention papers are expected on the vita of the average candidate for a job--something almost unheard of 20 years ago. As conditions change, how will research change? Are we willing to see as appropriate patterns of research and teaching/practice in modes quite unlike those we have followed and will continue to follow? What research and scholarship will the person in the business world, governmental service, or in non-profit organizations produce or be expected to produce?

What then of publication? The costs are rising and the subscriptions are not: memberships are perhaps stabilizing but at lower levels for most organizations; libraries are dropping subscriptions. Publication costs rise. Should we move to charging authors a page cost? Shall we charge non-members for review? Shall we discontinue one or more journals? (SCA is initiating a fourth major journal in an area of mass media.) We discontinued the Bibliographic Annual. That information on degrees granted, topics researched no longer sits on my shelf. We have little space for "forum" articles which raise interesting issues. Have we outgrown the need for these things? Prehaps we can sustain ourselves in current patterns in the face of fewer professional members, fewer resources offered by our own departments and by the organizations. Will

electronic publications with computer-transmitted and stored journals replace printed ones? It seems clear commercial publication would increase our costs and give no assurance of improved quality.

If time permitted, the list of problems could be extended and possible responses discussed. The responses will have implications for the number, variety and structure of our professional organizations. We may need quite different interest areas and quite different perspectives. But we have made major adjustments in the past and we can make them again. But whatever the adjustment may be, our professional organizations will remain essential for our research and scholarship--even if both evolve so that the organizations and the research become rather incommensurate with the present system.

ENDNOTES

[1]J(ames) M. Winans, "The Need for Research, The Quarterly Journal of Public Speeking, I (April 1915), 17.

[2]Ibid

[3]Ibid., 18.

[4]Ibid., 21.

[5]Ibid., 22.

[6]Ibid., 22-23.

[7]Ibid., 23.

[8]The Research Committee, "Research in Public Speaking," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I (April 1915), 31.

[9]J(ames) M. O'Neill, "The National Association," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I (April 1915), 56.

[10]Unsigned editorial authored by James M. O'Neill, "The Quarterly Journal and Research," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I (April 1915), 84.

[11]H. S. Woodward, "Secretary's Record of the First Annual Convention," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, II (January 1916), 87.

[12]Unsigned editorial authored by Everett Lee Hunt, "The Chicago Convention," The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education, XIII (February 1927), 51.

[13]Franklin H. Knower, "Graduate Theses--An Index of Graduate Work in the Field of Speech--V," Speech Monographs, VI (December 1939), 3.

[14]Everett Lee Hunt, "The Scientific Spirit in Public Speaking," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I (July 1915), 185.

[15]Ibid., 186.

[16]Ibid., 191.

[17]Everett Lee Hunt, unsigned editorial, "The Chicago Convention."

[18]Ibid.

[19]James A. Winans, "Th Forum," The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education, XV (November 1929), p. 570.

[20]Ronald J. Maton, Compiler, Index to Journals in Communication Studies Through 1979 (Annandale: Speech Communication Association, 1980).

TABLE 1

Journal Pages Available for Scholarly Publication*

Year / Journal	Inception	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1979	Comments
Quarterly Journal of Speech	1915	316	341	435	327	269	350	354	
Communication Monographs	1934	---	---	100	387	356	288	293	
Communication Education	1952	---	---	---	---	224	269	159	
Southern Speech Communication Journal	1935	---	---	65	235	286	287	349	
Western Journal of Speech Communication	1937	---	---	77	129	129	262	288	
Central States Speech Journal	1949	---	---	---	82	120	222	364	
Communication Quarterly	1953	---	---	---	---	121	139	214	vice Today's Speech
Association for Communication Administration Bulletin	1972	---	---	---	---	---	---	271	
Philosophy and Rhetoric	1968	---	---	---	---	---	192	226	
Journal of Communication	1951	---	---	---	---	149	340	773	
Human Communication Research	1974	---	---	---	---	---	---	355	
Journal of Broadcasting	1956	---	---	---	---	341	505	408	
Journal of the American Forensic Association	1964	---	---	---	---	---	128	227	vice The Register
TOTAL SCHOLARLY PAGES		316	341	677	1160	1995	2982	4281	
Degrees Awarded MA	1902	4	145	375	900	940	3224	**	
that year** PH.D.	1922	---	6	32	98	170	427	**	
Total Ph.D.'s to date **		---	20	198	621	1946	4784	**	

* Based on tabulation as an article in Index to Journals in Communication Studies Through 1979, compiled by Ronald J. Matlon. He excludes book reviews, forum articles, editorials, association business, news and notes, etc.

** Incomplete Data Available